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Recreating “moles”: Managing homosexual priests’ silence in an era of gay marriage

Refaire des « taupes » : gouverner le silence des prêtres homosexuels à l’heure du mariage gay

Josselin Tricou*

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A B S T R A C T

Drawing on research carried out in various locations, this article analyzes the paradox surrounding the ecclesiastical practice of secrecy regarding the management of homosexuality among Catholic clergy in the West. It argues that in a society marked by a relative liberalization of same-sex partnerships and a calling for sincerity when it comes to sexuality, the church feels compelled to increase the likelihood that gay clergy will keep quiet. In doing so, the author advances the hypothesis that the Vatican’s extensive efforts to invent and then fight against the phantom enemy of “gender-theory” supports this aim.

R É S U M É

Cet article explique, à partir d’une enquête multi-sites, l’état paradoxal de la pratique ecclésiastique du secret qui préside à la gestion de l’homosexualité chez les clercs de l’Église catholique en Occident. Dans un environnement institutionnel marqué par une libéralisation relative de la conjugalité homosexuelle et un appel à l’authenticité en matière de sexualité, on montrera que l’institution éprouve la nécessité de réaménager la probabilité que ces clercs se taisent au sujet de leurs préférences sexuelles. Ce faisant, on proposera l’hypothèse selon laquelle l’importante mobilisation du Vatican pour inventer puis lutter contre son ennemi de papier, « la-théorie-du-genre », participerait de cet objectif.

KEYWORDS: Catholicism, priests, masculinity, homosexuality, secrecy, revival

MOTS-CLÉS: catholicisme, prêtre, homosexualité, secret, réactivation

* Postgraduate teaching assistant in the Laboratoire d’études de genre et de sexualité (LEGS) (Research Center on Gender and Sexuality Studies), Department of Political Science, Université Paris 8.
LEGS-Laboratoire d’études de genre et de sexualité, 27 rue Paul Bert, 94204 Ivry-sur-Seine cedex, France.
josselintricou@gmail.com

Today the church wants to control the "closet." [. . .] It was an undercover way for gay men to flourish; it was a way of constructing a world for themselves within a world in which they could not exist. And one of these worlds, was of course the priesthood! And it was almost institutionalized! Because it is a world where you can hide while finding fulfilment in so far as the system allows it. And there is no other institution or enterprise within civil society in Europe that has played this role, only the Catholic Church [. . .] And that worked until the sexual revolution, it was even justified in the light of scientific developments and increased awareness. You could almost say that the church provided a certain amount of protection for gay men! The church gave you space to develop and protected you from a society that could not understand you, or that misunderstood you. . . OK, but all that changed with the sexual revolution, with the development of the gay rights movement, and today it is no longer the case. For me, today, the church no longer allows for true development, it is a semblance of development. I mean, priests have told me that I could carry on like that, leading a double life, but I think that for me that would have been suicidal. . . Because it would be a lie. Because the sexual revolution and the gay rights movement helped me to discover the importance of the public dimension of sexuality. (Interview with Msgr. Charamsa, former member of the Roman Curia, aged 43, November 2015)¹

In October 2015, Krzysztof Charamsa, priest, conservative theologian, and member of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the body at the heart of the Roman Curia in charge of promoting and safeguarding "the doctrine on faith and morals in the whole Catholic world"²) announced via the media that he was gay, and that thenceforth he wanted to openly pursue his long-standing relationship with his partner. Although he stated that he no longer wanted to live a lie, most importantly he broke with a secrecy that was effectively arranged by the church, and especially by the Congregation to which he belonged.

Secrecy (keeping quiet about something that is common knowledge within an organization and making others do the same) is a technique of "government," or rather of "conduct" in Michel Foucault's sense of the term (Foucault 1982),³ that

characterizes all institutions (Jamin 1977; Kaiser 2004). The Protestant theologian Éric Fuchs remarked that within the Roman Catholic church "it is the rigorous management of sexuality that qualifies the authority of the cleric as well as the obedience of the laity" (quoted in Buisson-Fenet 2002). In fact, two distinctive features of the Catholic Church, unlike the Protestant churches, are that the clergy are required to be sexually abstinent—sex being reserved for laypeople who are both heterosexual and married—and that these same laypeople are obliged to confess their sins to the clergy. It is therefore highly likely that a major part of this "practice of secrecy" (Kaiser 2004) within the Catholic Church should be focused on the management of sexuality. From this, Éric Fuchs concludes that Catholic "morality is more a battlefield than a specific issue, as the battle about morality is really a battle about ecclesiology" (quoted in Buisson-Fenet 2002), in other words, it is about the organization of the institution and its legitimacy. However, in the last few years the battle over sexual morality and family life has intensified within Western Catholicism. The church must face up to recent changes in the understanding of gender (Rochefort and Sanna 2013), and especially to the politicization of issues surrounding gender and sexuality within its institutional environment. This external dynamic—described by Éric Fassin (2006) as "sexual democracy"—exerts pressure on the church, which manifests itself internally through a growing recruitment crisis. This leads its dwindling number of clerics to further reflect on the way they express their sexuality and gender. Therefore, the role of the priest and the image of the church suffers what Clément Arambourou (2013) notes with respect to the role of presidential candidates and politics: "what the relationship between gender and sexuality reveals is that it is no longer based on evidence" but is now "an issue of political representation."

Starting with a revealing study of the quasi ideal-typical means of managing gay priests in the Western church,⁴ this article then moves on to explain the underpinnings and recent evolution

1. Translator's note: Our translation. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of cited foreign language material in this article are our own.

2. John-Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, section III "Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith," article 48.

3. "Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term *conduct* is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to 'conduct' is to 'lead' others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of

conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government." (Foucault 1982, 220–1) We must remember that Michel Foucault based his concept of governmentality on the Catholic model of pastoral power.

4. Throughout this article, I use "Western" to mean the cultural milieu in which both the political control of "late modernity" (Giddens 1990) and the historical control of Latin-rite Roman Catholicism (as opposed to the Eastern rites) co-exist, i.e., principally Catholic Western Europe and North America.

of the ecclesiastical practice of secrecy that guides this management. As gay experience and subjectivity become less centered around a rigid compartmentalization of private and public space (in other words, what is known as the closet), forms of same-sex marriage become institutionalized to the extent that they are now legally recognized, and the social context becomes more generally characterized by a call for sexual authenticity, the emphasis is on the paradoxical necessity for the church to revive this practice of secrecy. The church feels a need to “guide the possibility” (Foucault 1982), i.e., increase the likelihood, that gay clergy will keep quiet, just as nation states are—at least officially—abandoning such requirements. Lastly, this article presents the hypothesis that in order to achieve this, the Vatican has expended considerable energy inventing and subsequently fighting against its phantom enemy “gender-theory.”⁵ These three strands of analysis respectively steer each of the three sections of this article, which follows a spiral approach that moves from the specific to the general.⁶

Living in the ecclesiastical closet

2011. I met Fr. Adrien while working for a Catholic organization. Adrien is a diocesan priest in his forties and is parish priest of a middle-class urban parish. He presents a bodily *hexis* that is aloof

and distant. His surname has a nobiliary particle. His family comes from the old rural nobility of the ancien régime. He grew up in the so-called “traditional” or “unitary” scouting movement (Guides Scouts d’Europe, Scouts unitaires de France), which was created in the 1960s and 1970s in reaction to educational reforms undertaken by the Scouts de France. He wears a cassock in his parish and a dark suit and clerical shirt and collar elsewhere.⁷ He celebrates mass with a scrupulous regard for the rubrics.⁸ His homilies appear to be rigidly moralistic and “restorationist” in terms of ecclesiology—that is, they seek to revive the dream of a Christian society (Portier 2012). 2012. During the debates surrounding the opening of civil marriage to same-sex couples, known in France as “mariage pour tous,” I phoned my friend Fr. Marc, a priest in his forties who experienced what is known as a “late vocation.” As a “progressive,” he confided his sexuality to me and his distress at what he saw as a resurgence of homophobic rhetoric within the church. Although he had never publicly come out, he posted articles critical of the church’s virulence in the debate on Facebook. He told me he had dined with Fr. Adrien, who had launched into a diatribe that was both homophobic and against same-sex marriage. Fr. Marc was still in a state of shock. 2013. Writing my PhD thesis in political science on “the identity of men of the church,” as part of my sociological research I interviewed Fr. Julien, a monk in his fifties. We had met a few years previous when I was on retreat at his monastery and he discreetly flirted with me. Performing (Butler 1990),⁹ at least in front of me, the queen—that is the “folksy archetype of an effeminate man characterized by the double stigma of inversion and extravagance” (Le Talec 2008)—and amusing himself by referring to his brother monks in the feminine, in accordance with the tradition of “camp” humor (Babuscio 1977), he referred (with some irritation) to the many homosexual

This article is based on the findings of a broader PhD thesis that covered both the social representation and the contemporary practice of Catholic priests and male members of religious orders in the context of current changes in the field of gender and sexuality.

The material cited in this article comes from four immersive ethnographic studies undertaken in monasteries or religious training establishments, sixty biographical interviews with priests working in France or the Vatican, and more detailed follow-up interviews with four of those priests.

This research was undertaken in various places, and it should be noted that some of it derives from my own background. My prior socialization in the Catholic Church, and the fact that I am a man, should be taken into account as factors that have shaped this inquiry.

With the exception of Msgr. Charamsa, who was cited by name above at his request, all other names of interviewees have been changed.

In addition, some details have been omitted or altered (age, role, location) in order to conceal the interviewees’ identities as much as possible, since they risk not only their reputation but also their “vocation” if they are recognized.

5. “To distinguish the ‘gender-theory’ invented by the Vatican from the theories resulting from research into gender, the typographic convention of writing ‘gender-theory’ with scare quotes and a hyphen will be followed.” (Garbagnoli 2014). I will do the same in this article.

6. My thanks to Béatrice de Gasquet, Damien de Blic, and Yann Renisio for their careful proofreading of this article.

7. There are two forms of clerical dress that officially distinguish priests from laypeople in everyday life (i.e., when they’re not officiating at services). One is the cassock, and the other a dark suit worn with a shirt or bib with a “Roman” collar, so named because it looks like that of a Roman-style cassock. In the 1970s and 1980s there was a strong trend among the clergy away from clericalism, resulting in the vast majority French priests and bishops abandoning

any form of distinctive dress, but now the suit and clerical shirt appears to be “normal” dress among young members of the clergy. The cassock is still worn as a marker of traditionalism, although it is gradually becoming more common for members of the clergy to wear it.

8. In Catholic liturgical books, the rubrics are the sections that are not part of the text of the rite, but indicate how the rite must be performed.

9. Following Foucault’s approach, Judith Butler sees the performance of gender not as an act performed by a subject, but a repetitive process of imitating conventions “performed” by the subject. This repetition has the effect of constructing and creating the subject, although subjects can also play with their own performances depending on the extent of their agency, as Julien did here.

priests that he meets: "Especially the diocesan clergy, they're living a lie, a deception, and they're paranoid [frightened] to death. After they say to me: 'You must be discreet in public and so you must use double talk!' No! You cannot use double talk! You cannot go off in your cassock and protest against homos and then straight afterwards go and f... er... have sexual relations, er no... homosexual... homosexual, sexual relations? [Laughs] Freudian slip!" Rather than a genuine slip of the tongue, it seems that here is an example of one of the classic linguistic techniques for keeping the closet closed. This technique consists of heterosexualizing, or at least neutralizing, the vocabulary used when speaking of sexuality. Julien (probably) laughs because he is well aware that he has himself just used the same double talk that he had justifiably and vehemently denounced in his colleagues. But he continues, and cites the example of Fr. Adrien, knowing full well that he is a common acquaintance: "I don't judge him, I know him like the back of my hand and I like him a lot, but the terrible thing is that every time we're together in public, he says to me, 'Behave yourself! Behave yourself!' But I don't need to behave myself! And his big question is, 'Do you think that they believe that I'm gay?'" According to Julien, Adrien (who once asked him for help in "unifying his life as a priest" after he had discovered that he was sexually attracted to men) very quickly retreated to a double life divided between "pure love" for the church and promiscuous homosexuality involving anonymous encounters. His life is both temporally and spatially divided. According to Fr. Julien, it is a case of "cassock during the day and drag queen at night," and "at his home, there is his bedroom with his computer and the rest of the house; you can't get into his bedroom, it's kept locked." First, we must note that Fr. Julien's words may be all the more critical as he is a monk, and what is more a member of an ancient and prestigious order. However, from the point of view of the objective structures of the Catholic Church, the monastic (or regular) clergy have more independence from the legitimate ecclesiastical authorities (whether local or in Rome) than diocesan (or secular) clergy do. Their "deviant" members, protected by community life, are less directly exposed to the risk of "crude" judgement—the possibility of suffering insults or denunciations by laypeople. Then, continuing in the "flirty" spirit of our first meeting, Julien plays on our tacit understanding and perhaps seeks to impress me with his freedom of speech, particularly in contrast to the other priests that he talks about.

2014. Still as part of my PhD research, I undertook several consecutive interviews with Fr. Robert, a parish priest. Robert was in his fifties, and had a more cerebral lifestyle. He regularly wrote (among other things) texts encouraging more acceptance of gay people in the church. Although he never explicitly told me that he himself was gay, we had an understanding that that was the case. He unobtrusively performed the "bear"¹⁰ aesthetic and was a very discreet member of a Christian LGBT association. However, after meeting regularly for a year—and as an aside from a conversation that carried on from a

sociological interview (and that therefore was not recorded)—Robert told me that he had had a sexual relationship with a certain Fr. Adrien who had since completely cut ties with him, as he had with any priest that he saw as too overtly gay. He warned me: "He will never admit to it"—as if the aim of the sociological interview was an admission along the lines of a confession—and he cautioned me, saying, "He is the one who will trap you."

2015. I asked Fr. Adrien if we could meet again and mentioned my PhD research. I got a friendly response and he invited me for lunch. For four hours we talked about everything apart from my work, which ruled out any possibility of an interview. Fr. Adrien visibly controlled himself, especially when I led the discussion to recent events that had shaken French Catholicism, the main one being the mobilization against same-sex marriage and the violence that I told him this had inflicted on my gay friends. Before showing me to the door, despite not having once mentioned Fr. Marc during our four-hour conversation, he told me that in his opinion, Fr. Marc was not at all suited to the priesthood and that in fact he was going to leave. Although Adrien had not cited Marc's homosexuality, nor his own, I understood the implication. This exchange reveals a distinction between three categories of individual as he sees it: the good homosexual priest, who keeps quiet; the bad one, who is open about his sexuality and therefore not suited to being a priest; and finally the person who is not a member of the clergy—me—to whom nothing can be said, especially if they let it be known that they are "open," indeed sympathetic, to the LGBTIQ cause. Erving Goffman (1963) has accurately described the reluctance of those who are stigmatized (and especially those who carry an "invisible scar") to confide in or create real friendships with their "normal" allies.

Later, I sent him a text asking if I could see him again for an interview connected to my thesis. He replied that he had neither the time nor inclination to answer my questions—even though he did not know what they were—but went on to engage in a long conversation about the content of my research by SMS. . . The "tone" was sarcastic and even guilt-inducing. It was as if he had checked me out before I arrived and heard from another priest that I was asking questions about homosexuality. According to him, it was overstepping the boundary of people's private lives. And he sarcastically asked me if I was pretending to be a sexologist. So, the interview didn't take place. Better still, the lengthy exchange undertaken by text message (24 texts each way) might have succeeded in making me doubt the ethics of my method as well as dissuading me from taking it further. Because Adrien could have put an end to it by using his professional skills, firstly of inducing guilt and then presiding over reconciliation so that the exchange would not appear too unchristian. Of course, researchers often find themselves in the position of "commanding the commanders" (Chamboredon et al. 1994) and "although in some environments the physical risks are minimal, the interpersonal tensions can be worse" (Bizeul 2007). But here, rather than inspiring a reflection on methodology, it seems that the situation and the capacity

10. The "bear" gay subculture was created in the 1980s in reaction both to the effeminacy of the drag queens and the hypermasculinity of "macho" gays in the 1970s. It is characterized by a specific body image and relationship to sexuality. "Rejecting the tyranny of youth, hairless, muscular bodies, and objectified sex, [the bears] celebrated maturity, chubby and hairy bodies,

cuddles and camaraderie" (Tamagne 2013). The bears nonetheless reclaimed certain ambivalent masculine archetypes, notably that of the blue-collar worker or the lumberjack, which had themselves been reclaimed, and in a sense re-heterosexualized by trendsetters in the 2000s, through the figure of the "hipster" (see Hennen 2005).

for suspicion aroused by this interviewee is indicative of the power of the secrecy that over-determines his life. Suspicious as he is, Adrien shows himself to be as thoughtful an actor as the researcher, and gifted with powers of enquiry that enabled him to reverse the roles. Through a sort of projection and symmetrization of the situation, he assumes that, like him, the researcher must have something equally “life-threatening” to hide. So, it is no longer his secret, but that of the researcher when confronted by his interviewees that is now called into question. What is the real aim of this research, hidden behind the official and clearly understated one that is being “used” in order to gain access? What are the researcher’s real intentions? (Extracts from my field notes)

“The interview [. . .] must be [. . .] a type of participant objectivation that aims to accurately construct its object, and we should not admit information drawn from outside the social relationship that has been developed with a respondent to be part of it” (Laurens 2007, 117). This is why I have taken care to quote extensively from my field notebooks. In order to reveal my role as a participant within the social context, my notes make clear to the reader the different types of relationship I have had with Fr. Adrien at different times and in different contexts. This enables the reader to better appreciate the tenor of our final interview—or more precisely the way it was requested and refused—and to understand the institutional secrecy that overdetermined the entire relationship, an institutional secrecy that I will attempt to analyze in this article, both from a systemic and a situational angle. When brought together and cross-referenced, these snippets of stories about Frs. Julien, Robert, Marc, and especially Adrien (which were collected in a wide range of situations including “unscientific” social interactions, moments of self-analysis by the researcher, and partially-unsuccessful research interviews) shed light on the world of interiorized constraints, and the psychological profiles of priests that seem in many ways to be quite typical of contemporary Western Catholicism—even though no statistical method would enable us to evaluate their prevalence among the clergy.

What are these profiles? In modern terms, Frs. Adrien, Julien, Robert, and Marc could all appear to be suffering from “shame” (Chauvin 2008), that is, they are closeted gay men. But the

contemporary opposition between shame and pride does not adequately describe their situation. First, and especially in Adrien’s case, it only partially conceals another, older hermeneutic of homosexuality that summarizes the Proustian opposition between the “cursed race” and the “chosen people.” In the Catholic context, this means that self-sacrifice for the “chosen people” can appear as a form of personal and collective redemption for the “cursed,” making them the chosen among the chosen. Second, the opposition between shame and pride seems to be much too crude in the light of the different relationships between secrecy and the closet that each of these priests has constructed. In fact, they take the same number of distinct positions as are meaningfully reflected in the terms that they themselves use:

- Adrien clearly corresponds to the term “taupe” (mole), which I heard several times in the field. This term apparently designates a priest who is clearly in the closet and is trying to keep his peers within the closet—which may be where this term, taken from espionage comes from.
- As for Julien, his bodily *hexis* is clearly “telling,” although he does not explicitly assert the need for his homosexuality to be recognized by the church or wider society. Despite the Catholic “collective subject position” (Haraway 1988) that de-sexualizes or a-sexualizes priests,¹¹ Julien himself recognizes that some young men he meets when working “on the periphery” of the church are not mistaken about his sexual preferences. And he knows how to play on that by acting more camp in certain circumstances. In doing this, he embodies the “sacristy queen,” as they say in one gay clerical subculture. However, this indigenous expression is in itself significant: the sacristy refers to the backstage area of the liturgical stage, just as the closet does in a heteronormative context. It is a space that is out of the public eye (although the door may remain ajar) and is reserved for the clergy and their closest collaborators, where the costume that is worn on set is removed. The sacristy therefore symbolizes a community of the “happy few” who believe that they benefit from and enjoy exclusive knowledge and power that places them above the uninitiated.

11. This historically constructed collective subjectivity results in a sort of “Catholic gaze,” similar to the “male gaze” described by Laura Mulvey in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (*Screen* 16, no. 3 [1975]: 6–18), in which she notes the infiltration into both visual culture and daily experiences of a heterosexual gaze that eroticizes the female body. In contrast, the collective Catholic gaze desexualizes the body of the priest and makes it sacred. As an example of the effects of this Catholic gaze, in one

interview, a priest with a male partner explained his constant astonishment at the (feigned?) blindness of even the closest of his parishioners when faced with his homosexual practices. He thought of how his partner had stayed the night at the Presbytery or been on holiday with him over the years, without anyone suspecting that “the priest’s friend” (whom some people took to be a priest himself) was his sexual partner (interview with Fr. Michel, parish priest, aged 63).

- As for Robert, he seems to embody the type that Julien slightly mockingly calls "pseudos," i.e., gay priests who secretly fight for the "LGBTIQ cause" within the church. Although his bodily *hexis* is less telling than Julien's (the bear appears to heteronormative prejudices to be much less gay and much more "normal" than the queen) he, however, claims to be changing the institution from the inside. In order to change the church so that it fits with changes in society, he follows the practice of the progressive slogan, "*ni partir ni se taire*" (neither leaving nor keeping quiet), although he does so with great care, which can appear hypocritical when seen from outside, and very naïve in the eyes of some within the church, such as Julien.

- As for Marc, who could not cope with keeping the closet door shut, he ended up leaving the institution that placed him within it, but without denouncing it.

In this indigenous typology we see echoes of the three possible responses to difficult circumstances as described by Albert O. Hirschman (1970): exit, voice—here seen in two forms: either bodily or vocally—, and (silent) loyalty.

The case of Adrien, the "mole," who embodies silent loyalty to the church, is particularly interesting. He illustrates the existence of clergy from the so-called "John Paul II" generation of French priests who self-identify as gay. These priests entered the church during the pontificate of John Paul II between 1978 and 2005, after what Denis Pelletier calls the "Catholic crisis" of the 1960s and 1970s (Pelletier 2005). Generally considered to be a pivotal generation from the point of view of "the reconstitution of the priestly ideal" (Béraud 2006), these priests mostly embody what Philippe Portier (2012) calls an "identity-based Catholicism" in reaction to the "open Catholicism" that was brought to the fore in the 1970s and 1980s. Although this trend really began at the end of the 1970s, it became clearly visible in the church in the 1990s when these young priests appeared on the rarefied ecclesiastical jobs market. They wanted to separate themselves from their parishioners and to be a model for them. They therefore chose to wear a cassock or dark suit and clerical shirt in order to demonstrate that they were critical of the supposed laxity of

their elders, and they rigidly relayed the moral rhetoric of the Vatican.¹² In this respect, Adrien's public life appears to be the prime example of this generation. But his life proves to be all the more "divided" and his "closet" (to which he almost stakes a claim) is particularly shocking. Because although the closet and internalized homophobia may seem to fit historical means of social accommodation to homosexuality in societies founded on heteronormativity,¹³ they are increasingly less tolerated within society due to the relative liberalization of gay marriage and the creation of new means of subjectification characterized by questioning an individual's maturity and sincerity, as much outside Catholicism as within (Hervieu-Léger 1999). Since Adrien appears to be as loyal to the Catholic church's homophobic rhetoric as he is incapable of coming out as gay, it is therefore unsurprising that he proved to be suspicious of my research and of studies on gender and sexuality more generally, which he feels threaten him personally. Indeed, in one of the rare studies in French on gay clergy, Hélène Buisson-Fenet (2004) recognized from the outset that it would be impossible for sociologists to access priests conforming to this profile, even though it is evident to those inside the church that there are many of them. She notes that, "homosexual orientation in the priestly vocation is an issue that concerns priests of widely varying churchmanship, but it is much easier to gain interviews with those who belong to communities with a more open spirituality that promotes freedom of speech." This is because these clerics are obliged to create a "decoy" (Darmon 2008) in order to maintain a watertight seal on their deviant double identity. This characterizes them, in the view of both the church and society, as priests that are unbending on the church's homophobic rhetoric, even in pastoral situations,¹⁴ and who are therefore swimming against a general move toward being more gay-friendly. This is linked to an "inversion of the issue of homosexuality" (Fassin 2003), and results in individuals whose homosexual practices contradict the position of the institution that they are committed to publicly embodying. Seen from this angle, Fr. Adrien will maintain his role of gatekeeper and keep the two-fold secret of sexuality, and especially of gay priests, from me. But if he so strenuously refuses to let me in to the "spectacle of the closet" (Sedgwick

12. For a better understanding of the ideological stance of these priests, see Astraud 2003.

13. By heteronormativity, I mean the "asymmetrical and binary system of gender that allows for two, and only two, sexes, where gender corresponds perfectly to sex (masculine gender to male sex and feminine gender to female

sex) and where (reproductive) heterosexuality is obligatory, or at least desirable and respectable" (Kraus, in Butler 2006, 24).

14. Pastoral situations can be defined as those "local institutional practices that aim to spread the Christian message in real-life situations where it can be received." (Buisson-Fenet 2004)

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2008), this is also because it seems much less opaque and safe than before, and he knows it. Many Catholics, whether pro- or anti-LGBTIQ, are becoming increasingly aware of homosexuality. “Why are you writing a thesis on the masculinity of priests? Here’s your conclusion: they’re all queer!” one of my Catholic acquaintances said, laughing, not without a note of underlying homophobia. In reality, the fact that the Catholic priesthood can be an almost perfect closet is no longer a secret, rather, it is a partially open secret.

A closet in crisis

If you listen carefully to what Benedict XVI (successor to John Paul II and pope from 2005–2013) said about Catholic priests, you will notice that there is an increased reflexivity in respect to the production of gender and sexual identities as described by Arambourou (2013). The pope expresses this increased reflexivity as a fear that exists at the highest level of the church hierarchy, a fear that the priestly vocation may be perceived outside church circles as an occupation for gay men. In 2005, Benedict XVI, then prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith under John Paul II, announced for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church a ban on ordaining gay men and those who support “gay culture” to the priesthood (Congregation for Catholic Education 2005).¹⁵ Six years later when he became pope, in a book-length interview he reaffirmed his fear that “the celibacy of priests would practically end up being identified with the tendency to homosexuality” (Benedict XVI 2010). In what way could this “identification” be harmful? We cannot understand this without placing the fear expressed about it in the context of a wider logic of symbolic battles between different models of masculinity, more precisely, in the context of a current and overriding necessity for Catholic clergy to guarantee their masculinity in order to maintain their position in the intra-masculine hierarchy of gender.

Along with this possible identification of priestly celibacy with homosexuality, there is a risk that the priestly body (in both senses of the word) will be reduced to its disruptive potential in the face of “hegemonic masculinity,” to take up R. W. Connell’s term (Connell 2014).¹⁶ The form of masculinity that has taken hold in the West in modern times is in fact largely constructed around the rejection of male homosexuality. It can even be identified (although not without lapsing into a form of essentialism) with the glorification of active heterosexuality within the couple as a necessary adjunct to the prominence of cultural, economic, and political capital that is monopolized by the category of men. On this subject, Louis-Georges Tin (2008) defines the era of modernity as the progressive victory over all other forms of emotional communalization of what he calls “heterosexual culture,” that is the promotion of “dual-sex” marriage ultimately founded on feelings of love and what is seen as natural heterosexual attraction. In opposition to this culture, the Catholic priest’s performance of gender is historically constructed around a number of “extra-worldly” norms including “virginity of heart and body,” which originates in the imposition of celibacy in the eleventh century. Other norms include humility, faithful submission, care for others (care and curate have the same root), a rejection of warmongering and political engagement, and the free expression of certain emotions through estheticism or mysticism. These were described as “passive virtues” in the textbooks of nineteenth-century seminaries because they were coded as feminine and seen as degrading for respectable working men. This is indeed the paradox of the atypical form of masculinity seen in the Western Catholic priesthood. It is an *a priori* inferior way of being a man, but it offers statutory access to positions of authority within the church, not only over laywomen but also, and perhaps above all, over laymen who conform to hegemonic masculinity. This brings us to a second paradox. On one hand, the institution of the church is more opposed than ever to any debate that seeks to denaturalize normative heterosexuality, as can be seen from its offensive against “gender-theory.”

15. See Fassin 2010 for a critical reading of this text, which (despite denials within the text itself) explores its implicit homophobia, which goes way beyond the classic distinctions found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* between “acts” that are to be condemned and “tendencies” that are to be accepted as a given.

16. R. W. Connell’s conceptualization is constructed in opposition to androcentric and essentialist approaches to masculinity. Following this author’s reasoning, I begin from the presupposition that in any place and at any time “one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted” (Connell 2014, 77) or rather, is defined as a rejection of these other forms.

17. Connell (2014, 81) emphasizes that her typology of masculinities does not name “fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships.” In this context, hegemonic masculinity can be more precisely defined at a given time and place as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (ibid., 77).

most serious deviancy within the church is not the transgression of these norms—"there is a typically Catholic flexibility" (Béraud 2009) concerning acts performed—but rather the public questioning of their legitimacy. However, the necessity of not causing a scandal among the laity is largely interiorized by priests, whether gay or not, and is one of the "exit costs," that pressures priests to stay, even if it means "leaving from within," as a priest quoted by Céline Béraud (2006) puts it. "Leaving from within" consists of adapting to a double life while remaining within the institution. Given the excessive cost of a visible and irreversible defection, this is the low-cost option, even though it causes suffering. It is similar to the case of what Pierre Bourdieu calls the "internally excluded" within the school system:²³

I could not leave the church. I had my boyfriend, some colleagues knew that. However, I had never sought to put him on display nor to demand that he have an official position, because it was out of the question that I could harm the church with this story. Even though I feel a little differently today. (Interview with Fr. Michel, parish priest, aged 63)

Listen, you had to be discreet, even if it wasn't easy. You couldn't flaunt your sexual plight in public. First, because you're not just about your sexuality, and also because when a priest speaks, he speaks not only for himself, he speaks for the church, an institution that is already sufficiently weakened. And then there are the people of God, the parishioners, what would they say? They wouldn't have understood. And if they had understood, I'm not sure that shocking them would have served any purpose. Quite the reverse. (Interview with Fr. Arthur, worker-priest, aged 67)

Looking to deliberately cause a scandal is what Msgr. Charamsa was accused of by the upholders of identity-based Catholicism. For example, you only have to read the post entitled "La chute d'un prêtre" (The fall of a priest), published on www.padreblog.fr, by a young priest from the diocese of Versailles and former pupil of Charamsa in Rome:

We do not judge this priest's soul. We are all poor sinners. We can understand that he is leaving, that he can no longer fulfil his role. He could have left humbly, discreetly, no one would have judged him. But we have the right to ask him not to shock all those who trust priests, not to damage the priesthood into which he was received and

which we share, not to spread the poison of doubt and suspicion that will reflect badly on all his brothers. When you have fallen, you will draw humbly in silence and ask for forgiveness. You do not reverse the roles by accusing the church! Imagine a man who betrays his wife, and who—instead of begging forgiveness for his betrayal—justifies his adultery by accusing her!²⁴

In precisely timing his coming out to the media to coincide with the eve of the opening of a synod of bishops on questions of sexual and familial morality at which ecclesiastical polity on welcoming gay people was to be discussed, and at a time of highly polarized debate within Catholicism,²⁵ as well as through his subsequent public pronouncements—including his willingness to be openly cited in this article—Msgr. Charamsa clearly seeks to present himself as a whistle-blower, just as David Berger (2010) did before him.

In fact, the church calls for a double life. It is even its basic framework. That is what I want to say publicly. And this systemic imposition of a double life interferes with everything [. . .] In short, if you are a priest you are consciously or unconsciously part of a system that is lying about your own sexuality. (Interview with Msgr. Charamsa, former member of the Roman Curia, aged 43)

Nevertheless, some "pseudos" who subscribe to open Catholicism do not necessarily see his actions in a better light than those who are on the identity-based side. Some see it as "brave but inappropriate" (interview with Fr. Robert) or even "counter-productive" (interview with Fr. Jean-Marc, seminary training tutor, aged 60). These strategic judgements reflect their fear that such theatrics will result in a strengthening of the "don't tell" policy. Might not a revival of this policy seem necessary in view of the emergence from the shadows of activists and priests with identities that are "too" assertive because they have been partly socialized within gay subcultures? Is clerical masculinity not at risk of losing symbolic significance, given that in the West it already suffers from a symbolic subordination that is completed by the recent crises concerning revelations of pedophilia? More concretely, will these priests not be tempted to speak and/or to perform the normative clerical role in a more relaxed way than in the past, unlike older priests who express

23. To better understand this "exit cost," see for example Magne-Pingeon et al.'s (2015) book of testimonies.

24. Available at <http://www.padreblog.fr/la-chute-dun-pretre>.

25. A worldwide gathering of bishops, which was formally titled "the vocation and mission of the family in the church and in the contemporary world." This "ordinary" synod followed an "extraordinary" synod which had been called by Pope Francis a year earlier entitled "the pastoral challenges facing the family in the context of evangelization." This synod had exposed tensions between participants on the question of gay marriage following demonstrations against same-sex marriage.

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homosexual preferences or young men from very traditional backgrounds, like Fr. Adrien?

You're right [. . .] Us young monks, monks of around 40, we speak more freely. . . Fr. Marius, well, yes he's gay, but he is what they call a "mole." He arrived in the 1950s, it was as if the community [a typical community subscribing to identity-based Catholicism, which we had talked about during the interview] did not talk about it, and so it was not shown. But you are right. There has been a liberation in [our community] in the past few decades and there is greater freedom of speech. But not necessarily greater freedom in morals, right! It's not a whorehouse, it's not all briefs and boxers, that would be obvious! (Interview with Fr. Dominique, monk, aged 45)

The gay atmosphere among the young is very marked and makes me very uncomfortable, and from time to time I say that I didn't used to be a homophobe, but I am becoming one. [. . .] I even wrote a letter saying so to [the Abbot]. (Interview with Fr. Gaston, monk, aged 70, who had just returned to France after a long stay in a developing country)

A closet to be closed, reactivating the "visibility constraint"

This research has led me to propose the following hypothesis: What if this revival of the "don't tell" policy is being used as a means of conducting an external battle with the surrounding environment, as well as internally through texts originating with the magisterium? If this is the case, the decision in 2005 to forbid ordination to "those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called 'gay culture,'" and the moral crusade against "gender-theory" that the Vatican launched in parallel (Carnac 2014; Garbagnoli 2014) may be two sides of the same coin, two forms of this revival.

Listen, I worked for thirteen years at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Vatican. And so I know that not one of its members who produced these texts against [clerical] homosexuality and gender has read books on gender studies. In fact they're panicking! (Interview with Msgr. Charamsa, former member of the Roman Curia, aged 43)

The denigration of former colleagues in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by a prelate who has come out of the ecclesiastical closet and is now forbidden from practicing, is no doubt connected to the consequences of his outspoken use

of "voice," to use A. O. Hirschman's term. Nonetheless, he expresses the idea of an explicit link made at the highest level of the institution between the two causes, and a moral panic that has called for a response on his part.

Looking again at the career and personal goals of one of the main ecclesiastical proponents of these two causes, Fr. Tony Anatrella, this link becomes evident. A French priest and psychoanalyst who specializes in working with "suffering" priests and in the emotional and sexual education of seminarians, Fr. Anatrella has worked since the 1990s on re-psychologizing homosexuality, which he denounces as a sign of individual and social immaturity. However, a member of staff at the seminary that employed him described him as "too passionately attached to the question of homosexuality" (Informal interview with Fr. Romain, seminary training tutor, aged 55). At the same time, through many books and his role as an expert witness to the French bishops, he appeared in France as a whistle-blower on the harmfulness of "gender-theory." On the international level, he is also now one of the Vatican's most active ecclesiastical proponents in the fight against gay priests—it was his theory of homosexuality that underpinned the 2005 text—and against "gender." In particular, he was the coordinator of the *Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms Regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions*, which was published in several languages by the Pontifical Council for the Family. He had effectively been called in as a "consultant" to this Vatican body during the 1990s. However, these multiple positions are the fruit of a paradox. He became the mouthpiece for the Vatican agenda when he disappeared from the French scene due to a run-in with the law: complaints had been made against him for touching gay seminarians who were in therapy with him. The fact remains that by leaving France, he was able to export his homophobic and "anti-gender" ideas to the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These were then reinserted into the debate in France, bolstered by the legitimacy of the Vatican, which was required to make it more acceptable in Catholic circles that were the least sympathetic to any *a priori* condemnation. This was especially true of the more intellectual branches of Catholicism which, as Anthony Favier wrote (Favier 2014), seemed to be "worried by the speed at which some of the church hierarchy have dismissed gender studies."²⁶

26. See for example, <https://www.revue-etudes.com/article/ne-diabolisons-pas-les-theories-du-genre-14058>.

However, establishing proof of institutional intentionality based on the intentions of one of its members—albeit someone like Fr. Anatrella, who is both central and occupies multiple positions—is tricky. It is, however, possible to show the effects on priests of this response by the church through a series of facts that punctuate my research. The majority of my interviewees see the 2005 decision as being unenforceable in seminaries—because it necessitates a clear admission or an obvious offence—but susceptible of influencing priests who have already been ordained, or candidates in discernment. Similarly, the inclusion of the anti-gender crusade into the French Catholic scene through the demonstrations of 2013 has meant that many French Catholics have been caught up in an almost instantaneous politicization of homosexuality. La Manif pour tous²⁷ used the issue of homosexuality as a “proposal of commitment” (Boltanski 1999) to members of the ruling classes who supported the movement, who therefore moved beyond their usual “politicized apolitical” stance (Agrikoliansky 2014). However, it ended up becoming something for some “moderate” Catholics, who to start with were undecided on the issue, to push against (Tricou 2016b). This politicization also weighed heavy on priests, which may be why one gay priest, who had had a partner for years and was scrupulous about matters of liturgy, felt obliged to read a letter from his bishop from the pulpit inviting people from his diocese to join the demonstration against same-sex marriage in order to protect his own “closet.” Or conversely, it could be why the heterosexual priest who, being a “progressive,” decided to call for tolerance toward different forms of conjugality from the pulpit in the middle of the “mariage pour tous” battle, was subsequently reported to his bishop by parishioners who suspected him of homosexuality. It is also why, when I was spending a week of ethnographic observation in a seminary in France, the community discovered that I “did gender” after receiving information from a priest in another community that I had studied. That very evening, the seminarians printed out everything that they could find on the internet about me and took it to the rector. The next day, I was overwhelmed with aggressive questions, and a seminarian even left the table before the end of the meal, burning with rage and trembling. One of the young priests who was present, who two days later agreed to speak to me once his “fear” had more or less subsided, told me:

It's true that we were all panicking. It is because if you want to show that our sexual identity is not clear, and even if that were true, it would not be good. Because it would hurt the church to which *you* belong. (Informal interview, Fr. Enguerrand, priest in his final year of studies, aged 32)

Once again, the need to save the institution can be noted in these remarks. And the rector of the seminary felt it necessary to tell me sometime after my stay, as if to honor the Catholic principles of fraternity and hospitality, “You might be the devil that we had no right to kick out, but see I understand that you got no further interviews” (informal interview with Fr. Albert, seminary training tutor, aged 62).

More generally, if you look at the Catholic scene through the lens of the polarization between openness and identity cited above (Portier 2012), it seems clear that the second is founded on a desire to improve the image of the priesthood in the eyes of the laity, based on creating masculinizing impressions, and in doing so creating heterosexualizing ones. Thus in the following community, typical of identity-based Catholicism, the rector responded to my deceptively innocent question about the suspicion of homosexuality among Catholic priests, saying:

Well . . . the criticism of the world . . . but . . . pff . . . because for a long time priests have been nerdy! And nerds, well their strength is . . . um . . . not developed in the same way, but . . . I'm not sure how to put it but . . . well . . . me, I just never think about . . . um . . . if they're gay or not. For me, it's . . . well what counts is, is that he is . . . after, it's what he becomes.

But even so since 2005!

Yes, yes! But first of all the guys are honest . . . They know *right!* Well this document, this document from Rome . . . and then after, well . . . it's all . . . After, it's true, when you live in a *homo*-sexual [he distinctly separated the two] world, like a seminary or monastery, well . . . you have to watch that that doesn't *over* sensitize you! So we have this side that's a bit, a bit *rough!* [we went on to talk about the seminary's teaching methods]. It's necessary . . . and it puts them back in their place. (Interview with Fr. Albéric, rector of a seminary, aged 40)

As we see here, the denial of potential homosexuality among recruits to this seminary takes advantage of the confusion between sexuality and gendered *hexis*, or rather the belief in a strict connection between apparent masculinity and male heterosexuality. This typical heteronormative belief is even more

27. La Manif pour tous is a French protest movement against same-sex marriage. For more information, see the article by Stambolis-Ruhstorfer and Tricou (2017).

clearly seen in the remarks of the seminarians, as if gender mechanically denoted sexual orientation, or as if believing (or making yourself believe) it to be the case simplified the problem, with obvious masculinity removing all suspicions:

What is clear is that in this house, it is *absolutely not* a problem, in my opinion. *Clearly*, if you're homosexual you cannot become a priest! And this house has recognized that. We obey the church. Now, I know that there are other seminaries elsewhere that don't take this internal rule of the church so seriously.

But how do you know it has been taken seriously here?

Well, I've never come across one! Even though it's something that you can see! Which you can see *very clearly!* (Interview with Louis, 5th year seminarian, aged 30)

You can *spot* them! And in any case, they leave of their own accord! (Interview with Alban, 5th year seminarian, aged 38)

But these remarks contrast with those of this seminary training tutor who subscribes to open Catholicism:

No, well everybody knows that that is Benedict XVI and Anatrella's fundamentalism! I'm not going to psychoanalyze Benedict XVI here. As for Anatrella, [. . .] that's how he covers up his own homosexuality . . . So there you have it! No one believes this rhetoric, at least, not in the seminaries. However, I've been a member of two training teams, in two seminaries, and I can talk about [X] Seminary that I also know quite well, and I think you can also say the same for [Y] Seminary, so that makes four seminaries, er . . . And more widely, because we regularly have meetings with other seminary training tutors. So, no one believes these things! No one! And everyone has always thought that hunting down gays in the clergy was pointless, at least everyone apart from fundamentalists, schemers, sycophants, and repressed homosexuals. Anyway, if you did believe it, there would be fewer gay clergy, but there are loads. No, no one has ever believed that rhetoric! There may be a few young priests today who are cheerleaders for the ideology, who spread the rhetoric, but the clergy has disregarded it up to now! (Interview with Fr. Jean-Marc, seminary training tutor, aged 60)

Despite everything, Fr. Jean-Marc recognizes that in public “everyone keeps quiet, even though no one is stupid,” and that the increasing climate of homophobia reinforces that silence amongst both seminarians and staff.

This silence stems from the survival of a weakened institution that above all is conceived, according to Benedict XVI, within

a “hermeneutic of continuity” as opposed to the “hermeneutic of rupture” put forward by the open Catholics in the 1960s to 1980s. The reinforcement of the discretion required of priests with regard to the dichotomy between unofficial pastoral tolerance of actions and official doctrinal continuity, serves an overall policy of change management, or rather, the apparent lack of change in the norms of the Catholic Church when confronted by external changes. Such a policy reveals what, in relation to male domination, Pierre Bourdieu calls “a historical work of dehistoricization” (Bourdieu [1998] 2001), or in the case of the church, the work of eternalizing the institution. This work is all the more necessary because the church, unlike other institutions, self-defines as both human and divine. It sees itself as the repository and guardian of the complete and accomplished revelation of the word of God, which cannot tolerate too great a variability and historicization of its message at the risk of falling into self-destructive relativism.²⁸

The hypothesis posited here is fully compatible with Isacco Turina's argument about the tensions that currently appear in church rhetoric on questions of gender and sexuality (Turina, 2012). According to Turina, the church, “depended on a system of religious transmission inherited from parents,” showing that according to Weberian and Troelschian typology,²⁹ it is indeed a “church.” In contemporary Western societies, it can no longer do so. The magisterium now seeks to restart this “church” type transmission, and rebuild corresponding priestly vocations, by demanding “sect” type participation (creating a community of committed believers) not only in the consecrated life, but also and especially within certain lay movements (rather than among ordinary parishioners). The very strict discipline that is displayed may serve to aid the institution's survival, which is currently under threat in Europe. It is therefore unsurprising to note in recent documents from the magisterium that Turina has quoted, the recurrence of an aggressive tone from the Roman magisterium toward countries and their sexual policies. This may signal a need to reaffirm the counter-cultural nature of the priesthood, which has been undermined by late modernity. The Roman magisterium achieves this by taking a more masculinist

28. In the same way, the Catholic Church raised the specter of modernism at the end of the nineteenth century and communism after the Second World War. The main aim of this was to silence members of the church who were too quick to use certain innovations—such as philology and historical studies at the end of the nineteenth century or Marx's critique of ideology in the twentieth century—as critical tools, thus jeopardizing the

work of eternalizing the institution, an endeavor that required digesting slowly.

29. This typology is a classification of religious movements in relation to two opposing ideals or types, the “sect” and the “church,” which was first developed by Max Weber and his student Ernst Troeltsch.

position, just as Western societies and countries—at least officially—are abandoning such positions.

Should we see this escalation as hypocrisy or cynicism on the part of the Catholic hierarchy? Certainly not: "For to 'conduct' is to 'lead' others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities" (Foucault 1982, 220). The revival of the "don't tell" policy concerns all priests, and not just the "lower clergy," as they used to say during the ancien régime. So, therefore, it also applies to the Roman Curia and the pope himself! As Bernard Lahire (2008) wrote concerning the gradual exposure of the working classes to schooling, and hence socialization, from the classical era onwards, "the ruling classes first tried it on themselves." The same goes for the interiorized homophobia of the clergy. Thus, although in German church circles he is nicknamed "die Königin"—the Queen—and is regularly outed by figures who have worked with him, such as David Berger or Uta Ranke-Heinemann (a "progressive" theologian and former university friend),³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI is, in fact, the one who has done the most to fight against homosexuality within the clergy and against legal recognition for gay marriage in societies driven by "sexual democracy." In contrast, the new pope, Francis, seems to perform a masculinity that is in some way a defense against the suspicions of homosexuality that hang over the Catholic clergy. Did he not, at least verbally, rescind the "don't tell" policy when he famously remarked "who am I to judge?" in reference to Msgr. Ricca, a member of the Roman Curia whom he had promoted, when he was outed in the press as the result of an internal settling of scores?³¹ In doing so, unlike Benedict XVI, Francis can appear to be an "anomaly" at the head of a Roman Curia that is described by David Berger as being populated by phenomenologically "gayifying" masculinities, like those of Fr. Robert and Fr. Julien (because they have partially interiorized codes from within gay subcultures) or a divided masculinity like that of Fr. Adrien.³² "Anomaly" is

used here to mean a paradoxical performance of gender and male sexuality, in the sense that sociologists of education mean by the "paradox of success," when they find a case that contradicts trends that have been seen at a macroscopic level, and therefore contradicts theoretical expectations. In reality, Pope Francis's gender is not so much of an "anomaly" when you understand the Society of Jesus—the Jesuit order—to which he belongs. This organization gives us the opportunity to observe a masculinity that is phenomenologically "normalizing" and "heterosexualizing,"³³ because it is both characterized by a certain masculinity in action, and an intellectualism that is tempered with pragmatism. But it is a masculinity that is marginalized in Europe due to the loss in power of open Catholicism. On the other hand, what is new about the nomination of this pope, is the fact that a Latin American has acceded to the Chair of Saint Peter at a time when the Curia is predominantly made up of Westerners, and is suffering a profound institutional crisis. This is why some of its members make greater use of masks and unmasking; that is, they use rigid moral positions as a façade to hide homosexuality that does exist, and to settle scores to the extent that outing may be used as a weapon to exclude opponents. This therefore creates a context where that which must remain hidden is occasionally revealed, and that which must be silenced is spoken.

Conclusion

Starting with some types of practice found in the field, this article has sought to understand and explain the current state of the "practice of secrecy" that governs the management of gay Catholic priests in the West. These cases enabled me to establish an exploratory typology based on their argot, distinguishing "moles" on one side (those who embodied the "don't tell" policy), and "pseudos" and "sacristy queens" on the other, who respectively publicized their homosexuality beyond the clerical

30. <https://www.vice.com/de/article/der-papst-schwul-statt-asexueller-0000059-v7n12?Contentpage=1>.

31. <https://fr.zenit.org/articles/si-une-personne-est-gay-cherche-le-seigneur-est-de-bonne-volonte/>.

32. This climate affected Msgr. Charamsa when he joined the Vatican and has clearly played a role in his socio-sexual development: "from childhood I had an attraction (laughs) for the life of a priest. I have known about my homosexual attraction since adolescence, but I learned to hate it thanks to, or because of, the culture of the church. I went into the seminary at the age of eighteen. In

Poland, it wasn't talked about. Clearly. The climate there was cold, homophobic, and macho. And then I was fast-tracked to the Vatican. So, was it because it was the Vatican or because it was Italy? I don't know. I discovered that homosexuality could also be lived slightly more openly, hidden behind an artistic sensibility, for example. But it didn't mean that there was no homophobia in Rome, or that homosexuality was publicly accepted" (interview with Msgr. Charamsa, former member of the Roman Curia, aged 43).

33. See for example the Brazilian documentary "Amores Santos," which shows archbishops, bishops, priests, and pastors having virtual homosexual sex with an actor who contacted them and filmed them using his webcam.

circle, either through their voice or their body. This typology then enabled me to understand the recent evolution of these clerical practices of secrecy, which is related to the internal dynamics of the institution—a crisis of vocations, pluralization, and the polarization of lay expectations—and to the surrounding environment, which was itself changing due to changes in the political and identitarian significance of sexuality, the liberalization of homosexuality, and changes in marriage. We therefore saw that the emergence of the “sacristy queen,” and especially the “pseudo” (unlike the “mole”), have contributed to creating a crisis in the church’s “don’t tell” policy. This has disturbed an institution that certainly intends to keep quiet the fact that it has long been (and still is) one of the last remaining institutionalized closets in the West. It intends to hide this fact in order to maintain the symbolic performance of clerical masculinity. The emergence of these types has further disturbed the church because it is trying to find its place within a late modern society that is suspicious, and tends to marginalize the atypical gender profile of its representatives. This means that it has been necessary for the church to recreate “moles,” in particular by politicizing the issue of homosexuality and inciting the laity to moral panic—effectively playing the laity off against the clergy. In addition to being a moral undertaking, the fight against “gender-theory” may therefore be a question of ecclesiology. It may have an internal purpose of silencing gay priests by making the issue of their sexual preferences an extremely sensitive one, and a wider external purpose of providing a rallying cry for one of Catholicism’s foundational demographics. However, in doing so the church also risks accelerating the debate currently underway, the very debate that it wishes to silence. This leads me to offer three remarks concerning possible developments.

First, the research that has enabled me to bring to light these three types, and consider how this typology works on the ground, seems inseparable from the nature of the secrecy that has created it. It has effectively functioned as a call for a return to the moral order for the researcher himself. In revealing institutionalized inconsistencies between what the institution, or individuals within it, says and does, is he, in his role of sociologist, going beyond being a kind of involved voyeur (Humphreys 1970), trapped by the unspoken limits of the role and the distance it creates? What is the purpose of speaking out when, in the name of science, he publishes the secrets described above and risks a) producing something “sexy” and scandalous as a journalist would, b) reinforcing certain common stereotypes about his research and the institution those stereotypes

represent, since in “mainstream” culture, the church is already regularly reduced to sexual secrecy as in Dan Brown’s best seller *The Da Vinci Code*, and c) reinforcing the very process that the researcher describes, and thus increasing the probability that gay priests will keep quiet? In addition to these questions, legitimate as they are, it is revealing that this research has created an ethical issue. Bearing in mind the quote from Fuchs cited at the beginning of this article, if for the Catholic Church moral issues are primarily an expression of ecclesiastical challenges, then my research questioning one of the taboos that has done most to shape Catholic ecclesiology was bound in return to be questioned on its morality, whether by my interviewees, or by myself as an individual who was, in part, brought up in the Catholic Church.

Next, it seems important here to distinguish between critical analysis and whistleblowing. With regard to the “don’t tell” policy that weighs so heavily on gay priests, whistleblowing is already in fact widely practiced both within the Catholic Church and outside it by “progressive” LGBTIQ activists and publicized by journalists who are hungry for stories of this sort. Sometimes “reactionary” groups unwittingly contribute to this when they try to substantiate their public outing of a “gay lobby” among the clergy, or when they obsessively look for proof of Benedict XVI’s homosexuality in order to better counter an ecclesiological opinion. Those who variously try to out people usually rely on whistle-blowers from within the church itself. Their involvement serves to increase rhetoric about homosexuality within the church, such as the diversionary rhetoric of some clergy, which still risks exploiting or concealing individual voices. In this sense, the sociologist’s revelations are more akin to an “open secret” than a “security secret” or a “state secret.” Because in reality, this secret is indeed up for discussion, otherwise the researcher would not have been able to access it.

Finally, in addition to exposing this secrecy, an analysis that claims to be critical must take this discussion into account and place it “under the microscope,” putting all the scattered micro-voices (whether vocal or bodily) that form part of it—yet are rendered invisible by the “don’t tell” policy—into their overall context. Drawing on this contextualization, critical analysis can only suggest a meaning that frequently eludes those involved. But in doing so, it appears “by nature intrusive and it entails a certain amount of symbolic and interpretive violence to the ‘native’ peoples’ own intuitive, though still partial, understanding of their part of the world” (Scheper-Hughes 2000). In that

respect, few of the many protesters against same-sex marriage would agree with the hypothesis that I have put forward in this article, that is, that the crusade against "gender-theory" launched by the Vatican and its brief French incarnation in La Manif pour tous may also have served to recreate "moles" among the clergy. Certainly, few of these protesters were aware that in opposing this proposed legislation they were also playing into the hands of a clerical system that was struggling for survival in a changing environment. However, as I have written elsewhere (Tricou 2016b), La Manif pour tous, as a vibrant social phenomenon, has contributed to changing the social boundaries of Catholicism, notably by seeking to make same-sex marriage a red-line issue: "You can't be a Catholic without being against same-sex marriage," laypeople have told me in the field. In other words, although La Manif pour tous wanted to silence people, it has also spoken volumes and given a voice to others. It has brought topics that were silenced out into

the open, and despite itself has undoubtedly transformed the Catholic "common view," at least in part. In practical terms, this could result in a belated awareness of the maiden aunt who lived with a distant cousin. Or the priest who always goes on holiday with the same friend (see footnote 11). Or the gay and lesbian couples who went unnoticed in congregations but now no longer do so—either because they have taken a stand when faced with the symbolic violence of the times, or because they have got married and as a legally recognized couple have dared to ask for baptism for their children. I have come across many such examples in the course of my research, but the notes need to be systematized. Thus, the moral crusade launched by the Vatican against "gender" has itself, in the short term, contributed to silencing priests and some laypeople who do not conform. But in the medium term, it is likely that due to its intransigence and multiple politicizing effects, it will have markedly accelerated the current debate that it wanted to silence.

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